

# Gilroy receives lifetime environmental achievement award

Posted on November 30, 2023 by Sonoma Valley Sun

Sonoma County Conservation Council has announced that Sonoma Valley resident **Norman Gilroy** will be honored with a Lifetime Achievement Award for his dedication and action in support of environmental, planning and conservation work in the Valley and Sonoma County.

Gilroy, trained as an architect in England, formed his first architectural office after moving a Willis Polk house from Franklin Street in San Francisco to Belvedere, where it still stands proudly on the waterfront.

“After decades of experience as an architect and planner, leading projects from design to completion, Norman has a brilliant capacity for synthesis of concepts and finding breakthrough solutions to complex issues,” reads the award letter. “He is a team player who can gracefully bring people together by focusing on common goals and long-term impacts.”

In private practice in the 70’s, Gilroy worked in his Land-use Planning capacity to reclaim the worked-out quarry where Larkspur Landing now stands on the bay in Larkspur. As a part of the Master Plan, he negotiated the location for the Golden Gate Ferry terminal that connects Marin County with San Francisco and planned for the rail connection that is now a part of the SMART network in Marin and Sonoma Counties.

For 35 years, Gilroy served as President of The Institute for the Human Environment, a non-profit focused on international environmental problem solving. The Institute focused on bringing communities with specific problems together with other communities or planners who had solved a similar problem to share information and adaptive solutions.

In his retirement to Sonoma County, Gilroy was appointed to the Sonoma Valley Citizens Advisory Commission, where he worked for nine years to bring awareness of conservation and environmental and community issues to projects in the Sonoma Valley.

Recently, he worked with community members to change the trajectory of a large new warehouse at 8th Street and Hwy 121 which would have had hundreds of Amazon delivery trucks into and out of the warehouse every day, all day, year round.

Four years ago he formed Mobilize Sonoma and persuaded the SMART Board that storing tankers loaded with LPG in the Schellville area was not a good idea due to the unstable soils under the site and the threat of disastrous explosions and fires.

Today Gilroy continues his community planning and environmental work with local advocacy for the disposition of the Sonoma Developmental Center. He was one of the community members who submitted the **Next 100 Years Plan**, a community centered proposal, to the State.

That plan includes a development plan and financial plan centered on an Independent Special District to develop affordable housing and give the people of the Valley a voice in their own future. Like many of his projects, this is a far reaching, practical plan — some people say a pipe-dream. But the tenacity and creativity that led to this award is exactly what is needed for the Sonoma Developmental Center.

The award ceremony, sponsored by Sonoma Conservation Council, will take place on Wednesday, December 6, 5-8pm, at the Sebastopol Grange, 6000 Sebastopol Avenue/Hwy 12.

Tickets for the program, which includes dinner, the award presentations and music from the group Take Yer Medicine, can be purchased at the door with check or cash.